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Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 30 October 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)
later: Mr. Glanzer (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Austria)

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97-82394 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Organization of work

1. **Mr. Desai** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) apologized to delegations for the inconvenience occasioned by the delayed issuance of five documents. In the case of the report of the Economic and Social Council, its sheer size accounted for the delay. As to the other documents, the delay could be attributed to the fact that the reporting process had not been completed in time or that the documents were being prepared away from Headquarters or to the exceptionally large quantity of in-session General Assembly documentation attributable to the many working groups which were discussing the reform process.

2. He assured the Committee that he was carefully tracking all documentation for which his Department was responsible and would address the problems encountered.

3. With regard to the consideration of agenda item 97 (f) on the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty scheduled for 31 October, he noted that the Secretariat had been asked to prepare a report on the activities undertaken rather than a policy analysis. It had been decided that, as an experiment, the report would be presented orally and would be accompanied by a written text, thereby allowing additional time to compile more current information on the poverty eradication efforts of the United Nations system. Other documents, including the 1997 *Report on the World Social Situation* would be available to supply the analysis which the Committee required. If the experiment was unsuccessful, it would not be repeated.

4. **Mr. Abdellatif** (Egypt) pointed out that the substantial decrease in number of resolutions submitted by the Group of 77 over the past five years had led to a reduction in the number of reports requested of the Secretary-General. That should have led to a decrease in the volume of documentation.

5. The presentation of an oral report on an experimental basis was unacceptable. Moreover, delegations should have been informed of the situation at the outset of the Committee's deliberations.

6. **Mr. Biaou** (Benin) pointed out that the report requested in paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 51/178 had not been provided and that none of the analytical documents to which the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had referred contained the overall assessment requested in that paragraph. Delegations had expected to learn from the Secretariat how the United Nations system intended to observe the Decade.

7. He proposed that consideration of the sub-item should be deferred until the documents to which the Under-Secretary-General had referred were available and delegations had had time to consult.

8. **Mr. Djabbari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he fully endorsed the statements by the preceding speakers. The six-weeks' rule for the circulation of documentation should be fully observed in respect of all General Assembly Main Committees.

9. The quality of the documents before the Committee also was a matter of concern to his delegation; they were not analytical and lacked action-oriented recommendations.

10. The presentation of an oral report where a written one was expected was entirely unacceptable and would set a dangerous precedent.

11. **Ms. Hormilla** (Cuba) expressed her delegation's surprise and disappointment at the explanation provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and said that the presentation of an oral report was entirely unacceptable. Moreover, the quality of Committee documentation was inconsistent with efforts under way in the context of the reform process to place development in the forefront of United Nations concerns. Her delegation agreed that consideration of agenda item 97 (f) should be deferred.

12. **Mr. Kamando** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the presentation of oral reports was unacceptable. He agreed that Committee documentation did not contain sufficient analysis and supported the proposal that consideration of the item should be postponed.

13. **Ms. Amoah** (Ghana) expressed the hope that the six-weeks' rule would be observed in future and asked that delegations be given advance notice whenever new methods of work were envisaged.

14. Since the expected report had been assigned a document symbol it had been all the more disappointing to learn that the report was to take the form of an oral presentation.

15. **Mr. Rahamtallah** (Sudan) said that his delegation shared the concerns of previous speakers regarding the procedural problems posed by the presentation of an oral report where a written one was expected.

16. **Ms. Linde** (United States of America) shared the concern expressed by the Group of 77 regarding an oral

presentation on an issue of such importance, noting that such presentations posed two problems: they made it difficult for delegations to report to their capitals and to consult one another, and they could lead to misunderstandings. Her delegation therefore agreed that consideration of agenda item 97 (f) should be deferred.

17. **Mr. Azaiez** (Tunisia) agreed that it was unacceptable for the Secretariat to submit an oral report on agenda item 97 (f) and insisted that it provide a written report.

18. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by all the preceding speakers. His delegation also was unhappy with some interpretations presented in documentation before the Committee.

19. **The Chairman** suggested that since some delegations were prepared to speak on agenda item 97 (f) on 31 October, they should be permitted to do so, after which consideration of the sub-item would be suspended until a written report was available.

20. **Mr. Kamando** (United Republic of Tanzania) requested details of the financial implications of the Chairman's suggestion.

21. **The Chairman** said that there were no financial implications, since the Committee was scheduled to meet through 24 November 1997. The procedure he had suggested would merely reduce the time available for informal consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

22. **The Chairman** suggested that consideration of the agenda item 97 (f) should be postponed until the Committee had completed the consideration of the other items remaining on its programme of work; in the meantime, the Secretariat would prepare a written report on the topic as requested.

23. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*) (A/52/92, A/52/112, A/52/139, A/52/153-S/1997/384, A/52/163, A/52/217-S/1997/507, A/52/284, A/52/318, A/52/432, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460, A/52/514-S/1997/815)

(c) Population and development (*continued*) (A/52/208 and Add.1)

(d) International migration and development, including the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development (*continued*) (A/52/314)

24. **Ms. Andrews** (Canada) said, that while Canada continued to place a high priority on issues related to international migration, it was reluctant to recommend proceeding with an international conference on the issue unless certain prerequisites were met. For example, the conference should serve the needs of sending, receiving and transit countries, consistent with the Cairo Programme of Action, and, there must be agreement on its agenda and the preparatory process.

25. If no consensus emerged on the objectives or modalities of an international conference, the issue of global migration and development could still be addressed meaningfully in other forums. From its own experience, Canada was enthusiastic about the utility of regional, interregional, subregional and bilateral discussions on migration. As the relationship between migration and development was by no means straightforward, Canada would also favour a discussion of migration issues within the context of the five-year review and appraisal of the International Conference on Population and Development.

26. **Mr. Chang Beom Cho** (Republic of Korea) said that the Cairo Programme of Action had explicitly acknowledged the linkage between population and development by creating a new understanding that population programmes should reconcile individual aspirations with the long-term development objectives of the community as a whole.

27. His delegation believed that it was vital to ensure coordinated system-wide follow-up for all major conferences including the Cairo Conference, and in that regard, it commended the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. Since issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women were closely related to the goals of population and development policies, priority should be given to education for girls, combating violence against women and mainstreaming of a gender perspective. South-South cooperation could also provide an effective means of implementation, and his Government had much to offer in the light of its own experience in tackling population problems. His delegation welcomed the proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/208/Add.1) regarding the review and appraisal process for the Cairo Programme of Action, and suggested that resource mobilization could be emphasized during that process.

28. While it believed that greater attention should be paid to the issue of international migration, especially where it involved the protection of the human rights of migrants and the control of illegal immigration, his delegation had some reservations about the merit of convening a conference on

that topic because of the lack of consensus on its purpose and objectives. It would be more practical and cost-effective to focus on strengthening existing mechanisms and the commitment of Governments to them.

29. **Ms. Benecke** (El Salvador) said that her delegation attached great importance to an intergovernmental dialogue to promote an exchange of experiences on migration and to deal frankly and objectively with all aspects of migration. However, agreement had yet to be reached on the appropriate form for such a dialogue; her delegation was prepared to join the consensus that would emerge in that regard.

30. Migration was clearly an important issue to El Salvador – over a million Salvadorians were currently living outside the country. During the 1980s the cause of that migration had been the armed conflict; currently many Salvadorians left to seek a better standard of living and job opportunities. The economic impact of migration in the form of family remittances was undeniable; they represented the country's main source of foreign exchange.

31. El Salvador recognized that migration was a complex and constantly changing phenomenon, whose origins, manifestations and effects were important items for the international agenda. Migration between developing countries was a significant factor that deserved further study. Ongoing dialogue was needed to promote greater understanding of migration and to counteract the anti-migrant attitudes that prevailed in many countries. One of the priorities for El Salvador was guaranteeing the human rights of migrants, especially women and children.

32. In conclusion, her delegation recognized the work of the International Organization for Migration in that area, and hoped that its cooperation with the United Nations system would continue to bear fruit.

33. *Mr. Glanzer (Austria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

34. **Ms. Espinoza** (Honduras) said that the key to solving the problem of migration of workers was economic development, since that would diminish the main incentive for migration. The international community generally dealt appropriately with the situation of individuals who fled their home countries because of political oppression, but migration for economic reasons did not enjoy the same consensus.

35. The new economic order favoured the free movement of goods and capital, but not the free flow of labour, even though labour was considered an economic factor of production. From a purely macroeconomic viewpoint, immigration was a positive factor because it represented the movement of workers, a production factor, from an area of low productivity to another of high productivity, which, from a global perspective, created a better distribution of resources. The global gross domestic product, if such a thing existed, would increase when salaries and productivity were thus maximized.

36. However, looked at from a microeconomic viewpoint, migration created winners and losers, the winners being migrants, whose wages were higher than at home and their employers, since they were obtaining cheap labour; the losers were capitalists in developing countries, since wages went up when the supply of labour decreased, and workers in the developed countries, because the supply of labour pool increased. High-income countries restricted immigration in order to protect the second group of "losers" – their domestic workers.

37. If the economic situation of developing countries improved, wages would increase and immigration would decline. In that context, her delegation appealed to the developed countries to reaffirm their commitment to help eradicate poverty. At the same time, her delegation remained committed to addressing the problem of migration directly and urgently, particularly in the wake of the disturbing incident involving the abuse of deaf-mute Mexican immigrants in New York. Her delegation accorded high priority to the issues of migration and sustainable development.

38. **Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway) expressed his delegation's support for the follow-up activities to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. It encouraged the United Nations system to take a comprehensive and holistic approach to population and development, emphasizing human rights, reproductive health and the empowerment of women. In that connection, it welcomed the efforts already undertaken to coordinate population activities, particularly at the country level.

39. Concerned about the shortfall in resources, reported at the September meeting of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), his delegation called on an intensification of efforts to provide sufficient funding in order to reach the targets set at the Cairo Conference. It welcomed the idea of a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action in 1999 and agreed with the content and modalities for such a review outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/208/Add.1). Such a review should focus on lessons learned and on changes and improvements in implementation strategy.

40. His delegation supported the preparatory activities outlined in the report. Cooperation among the relevant United Nations agencies, particularly the Commission on Population and Development, the Population Division and UNFPA, and the Governments of donor and programme countries would be crucial. In that connection, the Commission on Population and Development must play a primary role in the follow-up to the Programme of Action, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/176. The preparatory process might also focus on developing qualitative and quantitative indicators in order to improve the targeting of population activities.

41. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development (A/52/314), there was still a need for indicators and more reliable data on migration. International migration was linked to economic, political and cultural interrelationships that affected the development process and were affected by it. He praised the United Nations for addressing such a large-scale and complex issue through, *inter alia*, its proposal to convene a conference on international migration and development. There should be agreement on the goals and fundamental issues to be discussed at such a conference. The conference should take a comprehensive approach, covering such issues as the economic constraints of the receiving countries and the impact of migration on both host countries and countries of origin. In view of the ongoing work in the United Nations system and other international organizations relating to those issues, a final decision on convening an international conference should be postponed.

42. **Mr. Al-Harthy** (Oman) said that the phenomenon of international migration, was often related to the supply and demand of labour. Workers migrated from their countries of origin, where wages were falling, to host countries which had a shortage of labour. Development was therefore both a cause and a consequence of migration. Such migration benefited the host country, which was assured a supply of qualified labour, and the country of origin, where incoming remittances from migrant workers often exceeded export earnings and capital from foreign investment.

43. It would not be appropriate to convene a conference on international migration and development, since there was no consensus as yet on the agenda or goals of such a conference or on how it should be financed. Moreover, the question of international migration and development had already been considered at many United Nations conferences and it might be dealt with more effectively at the bilateral or regional level. The need to conserve resources, in light of the financial crisis of the United Nations, was yet another reason for not holding such a conference.

44. **Mr. Kwok** (Singapore) said that the time was not ripe for a United Nations conference on international migration. Rather, efforts should be focused on collecting additional data and studying the issues involved. Moreover, according to the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.9/1997/3), international migration had been on the agenda of every major international conference since the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as being the subject of the International Symposium on Environmentally Induced Population Displacements and Environmental Impacts Resulting from Mass Migration.

45. In his report to the Commission on Population and Development (E/CN.9/1997/2), the Secretary-General stated that international migration and development were interrelated and that the linkages were numerous and complex. While Governments were interested in the root causes of international migration and its impact on sending and receiving countries, they had no coherent theory to explain it and only a weak understanding at best of the complex political, economic and social interrelationships between migration and development. In short, there was no easy solution to such a complex issue and the international community should not be distracted from its primary goal of development.

46. In General Assembly resolution 51/148 (para. 3), the Secretary-General was requested, in consultation with the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration to foster systematic consultations on matters of common interest. His delegation looked forward to the outcome of the technical symposium on international migration, to be held in July1998 under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. It would be particularly interested in any recommendations that might emerge regarding methods of data collection and selection criteria.

47. In conclusion, he said that the Committee should reconsider the issue in three years time.

48. **Mr. Williams Slate** (Nicaragua) said that among the causes of migration were the gap between rich and poor nations, the high rate of unemployment in the developing countries, and – as had been the case in Central America and, in particular, in Nicaragua during the 1980s – armed conflict. The press and even the Internet, which provided information on employment opportunities in the developed countries, had an impact on migratory flows. Migration was frequently beneficial to both the host country, which acquired much-needed labour, and the country of origin, where it eased unemployment and generated remittances to family members, but the benefits could also be one-sided,

as, for example, when a student from a developing country did not go home after completing his studies abroad.

49. The Central American countries met periodically – most recently in October, in San José, Costa Rica – to harmonize measures to control migratory flows and entered into bilateral agreements concerning migrant workers. His delegation fully supported the proposal to convene a United Nations conference on international migration and development.

50. **Mr. Yoshino** (Japan) said that the Commission on Population and Development should strengthen its efforts to publicize its work more widely beyond the United Nations. To achieve the goals established by the International Conference on Population and Development, the international community must take multidimensional approaches to the population issue, combining family planning activities with activities that addressed the root causes of population growth, such as poverty and lack of education. In that regard, he lauded the clear goals established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination Task Force on Basic Social Services for All for its activities, and welcomed the Task Force's initiative in developing a set of indicators in the context of the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development. The Task Force must ensure that its activities were applied to efforts to promote the implementation of the Conference's Programme of Action in developing countries.

51. In 1994, his Government had launched a vast programme on population and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) as part of its contribution to the follow-up to the Conference. Since then, it had invested nearly $2 billion in population and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS related activities at the bilateral and multilateral levels. His delegation, which was convinced that South-South cooperation would play an effective role in population and development issues, supported the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in that area, and encouraged the Fund to further strengthen its catalytic role in the framework of cooperation within its scope of activities, particularly through its programmes in Africa. Japan recognized the need and significance of traditional donor support to South-South cooperation.

52. The proposals outlined in the report before the Committee (A/52/208 and Add.1) were welcome and his delegation supported the suggestion in paragraph 4 concerning the three-tiered mechanism comprising the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Population and Development. It did not believe that renegotiation of the Programme of Action was part of the review process. What was required was a review and appraisal of progress made in achieving the Programme's goals and objectives; in that effort the primary focus should be on implementation at the national level. That review should permit an objective assessment of the extent to which the Conference's goals had been achieved, based on concrete indicators. As a major operational arm for implementing the Programme, UNFPA should play an important role in the review process as should the Commission on Population and Development.

53. **Mr. Wardhana** (Indonesia) said that without decisive and continuing progress in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action, the chances of stabilizing the world's population would be dangerously jeopardized. It was crucial that ways be found to give new political impetus to the Programme of Action. His delegation therefore fully supported the proposal for a review of the Programme of Action in order to identify the major obstacles to its implementation and to seek ways and means of overcoming them and believed that it would have been most appropriate to convene a special session of the General Assembly for that purpose. It was therefore disappointed at the Secretary-General's recommendation that a two-day high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly be devoted to the review (A/52/208/Add.1, para. 28). While fiscal concerns must be taken into account, it was rather short-sighted to place them above the need to ensure the implementation of the Programme of Action.

54. Major demographic problems projected for the developing countries and the strong correlation between the population explosion and the level of economic growth and development must be taken into account in the proposed review. In that regard, the partnership for promoting and integrating the population component into the broader development concept was of paramount importance. The review should also address the key issue of availability of financial resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

55. While Governments still had the primary responsibility for implementing the Programme of Action, the full involvement of the international community, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations was needed to ensure the success of the review. Furthermore, the South-South cooperation mechanism, in particular the triangular approach to such cooperation, could play an important role in promoting sustainable population growth and development. Indonesia was willing to share its successful experiences in the area of triangular South-South arrangements with other countries.

56. **Mr. Jabbari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Cairo Programme of Action needed to be implemented in a comprehensive and non-selective manner. Unless adequate new and additional financial resources were forthcoming the chances of achieving the Conference's objectives were very slim.

57. Population policies and family planning were fully integrated into his country's development plans. Such plans, while aiming at achieving economic growth and sustainable development, also addressed the urgent need for reducing the population growth rate, as well as maternal and infant mortality rates.

58. A family planning law had been enacted and a number of measures had been taken to address the needs of adolescents, including educating young girls on reproductive health and family planning. Family planning programmes had been integrated into the broader concept of reproductive health, and activities such as workshops, public awareness programmes and exchanges of experiences with other countries through bilateral and multilateral channels had also been implemented. Although HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases were not particularly prevalent in the country, the Government had undertaken a number of activities in that area, including the supervision and administration of blood transfusion services. As a result of the implementation of a wide range of policies during the past 10 years, the population growth rate had declined from 3.2 per cent in 1986 to 1.6 per cent in 1995.

59. During the past 19 years, his country had been hosting a very large number of refugees from a number of neighbouring countries; there were now 2,100,000 such refugees. In addition to housing, food, health care and education, and despite extremely limited international assistance, his Government also provided reproductive health care facilities to those refugees. UNFPA could play an important role in the latter area.

60. **Mr. Al-Khalifa** (Bahrain) said that, having considered the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development, including the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development (A/52/314), his delegation saw no pressing need for a conference on international migration and development to be held. The issues had already been discussed in a number of United Nations conferences, and could be addressed through existing United Nations mechanisms or even through bilateral negotiations. It would be preferable to use the scarce resources to ensure that the undertakings agreed at those conferences were implemented. Any exchange of views on the possible goals of the conference and the matters to be discussed at it would only lead to prolonged negotiations, which would adversely affect other programmes of the Organization.

61. **Mr. Ri Kwang Nam** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that if an appropriate solution was not found to the population issues, equitable and sustainable development could not be achieved. Accordingly, the role of the United Nations system should be further enhanced in the implementation of the Programme of Action. In particular, it was imperative that the role of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA should be further enhanced, since UNFPA was the lead agency for population issues.

62. In addition, the lack of financial resources should be addressed in a timely manner, since it was regarded as one of the obstacles to the implementation of the Programme of Action by developing countries. While it was important for the developing countries to mobilize their financial resources to the fullest extent possible, it was equally important for the international community to provide assistance.

63. **Mr. Rao** (United Nations Population Fund) said that the comments and suggestions of delegations regarding the process and modalities for the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development would be taken into account in the future work of UNFPA.

64. **Mr. Chamie** (Director, Population Division) said it was clear from the discussions that international migration remained a fundamental aspect of development. Furthermore, based on the Division's research and analysis of population trends and policies, the issue was expected to take on an increasing economic, social and political significance in the twenty-first century. That would require greater attention by the Organization. His Division stood ready to work with Member States to meet their requests and needs in a timely and efficient manner.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.